



County of San Benito

California Microbusiness COVID-19 Relief Grant: Proposal

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I. Application Experience/Past Performance

The County of San Benito (County) establishment on February 12, 1874, is located on California's central coast, south of Santa Clara County, covering 1396 sq. miles. It served its residents of approximately 63,000 community members.

Upon the declaration of the national emergency, on March 13, 2020, concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak and Shelter in Place & Executive order(s) issued by Governor Newsom, our community and neighboring communities have felt the devastating effects of the pandemic. The County has made great efforts and worked tirelessly to support our local economy and invest resources into alleviating the overwhelming financial pressures that COVID-19 has imposed. In early 2020 the County Board of Supervisors allocated one million in emergency funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after, the State of California issued a \$1.3 billion allocation toward counties based on population size through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The County has administered county-wide grant opportunities for local organizations and is confident in its capability to facilitate a micro-grant.

The Board of Supervisors approved the CARES Act proposed Budget, which included A Small Business Grant Program totaling \$1.5 million and a Non-Profit Grant Program for \$500,000. On July 6, 2020, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on San Benito County small businesses and their employees, the County committed the \$1,500,000 in one-time funds to create a Small Business Assistance Program administered by the County's Workforce Development Agency with development, support, and oversight from the County Administration Office. This program offered immediate financial assistance to small businesses located in San Benito County who were significantly financially impacted by COVID-19. Through set criteria,

evaluation, the oversight committee reviewed the applications and deliberated recommendations. On July 21, 2020, The Board of Supervisors approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Community Foundation. This 501(c)(3) non-profit organization has been instrumental in providing grants and assistance to develop and strengthen local non-profit organizations in San Benito County. To administer and execute a grant program to support non-profits impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency, according to the CARES act, the Community Foundation and United Way ran a COVID-19 Non-Profit Relief Grant program to award the \$500,000. The composed oversight committee deliberated, and the Community Foundation distributed the funds accordingly. Both programs were successful in reaching the most vulnerable populations.

County Administration created and managed round two business grants where \$535,000.00 was issued to local businesses with American Rescue Act Funding. The County issued grants in increments of \$5,000, \$10,000, and \$15,000.00 for small businesses that were significantly impacted by COVID-19 and forced to close their doors. The County was able to support 57 small businesses. The County Administration team created the application to capture the information from the set criteria. We also required the applicant submission to hold an active business license, 2019 and 2020 tax returns, a profit and loss statement to verify the business and economic impact to the business. The applicant signed the application attesting under perjury under the law of California that the information contained on the application was correct and true.

Outreach for both programs included identifying and understanding underserved business groups' needs and those impacted the most by COVID-19. Through a series of partnerships, outreach was successfully conducted through various means. Outreach included public

announcements, mailers to registered business owners, flyers for display at County and partner offices, postings on social media outlets and the County website, an established line of communication with the community members, and public awareness workshops in dual languages designed to extend participation in the grant programs.

II. Proposed Program Design & Implementation

The County's goal, to provide a quality grant program, proposes aligning it with its strategic goals: Operational development and excellence, planning for sustainable growth, technology, community engagement, and health & safe communities while prioritizing micro business is a member of a group that has faced historical barriers in accessing capital. The County's strategic plan includes fundamental values and focuses areas established to assess community businesses' needs to meet community needs effectively. The goal is to develop a well-rounded grant program and criteria targeting our intended audience. County staff would establish and communicate program goals, a plan of execution, develop grant applications, a timeline of implementation, and a monitoring plan to be presented to an established oversight committee. The oversight committee would consist of two board supervisors, county staff, partnering agencies, and public members.

The process would begin with committee approval of the grant program details, application, and the established deadline schedule, which is available in section IV of this proposal. Once approved, County Staff will start by conducting outreach through various means. Outreach efforts would include the following: making announcements at a public meeting, having county departments and partnering agencies display grant information at their respective offices, expanding exposure to the public's eye, and sharing information with their members.

Additional outreach includes broadcasting on social media platforms, such as the County website, Twitter, Instagram, & Facebook, and having our Public Information Officer do a Nixle post as well. Given our experience with other grant programs, we are also looking to host two workshops for public members to ask questions and learn about the grant program before it is opened to the public. Though most outreach is to be done before the application opens, continued outreach would still be essential during the application submission phase. During the open application period, the County proposes to have the application available on the county website in both English and Spanish languages. It will be readily available as a fillable pdf, a fillable form, and printable as well. Hard copies can also be requested through our established line of communication and provided at the County Administrative Office. There will be critical questions on the application to deter fraud, waste, and abuse of resources while also collecting the proper information needed to evaluate better each application received. As each application is received, county staff will track and log each one into a data excel sheet.

After closing the application, County Staff will conduct the initial vetting process in collaboration with other essential county departments to verify that each applicant is in good standing with proper business registration and no outstanding fees. The second phase of the vetting process will include the oversight committee. During this second phase, County staff will present each application for the committee's consideration and evaluation on its alignment to the established criteria. Once each application has been vetted and approved, notifying the grant applicants will ensue. The County staff would issue official notice via a notification letter emailed to the email address provided. The notification letter will detail when they can expect funds to be available and any compliance requirements that need to be met as a grant recipient. The County Auditing Department will assess each application approved for proper

documentation before issuing payment. As we conclude the Program, it is critical to review and note all grant recipients and funding allocated. As part of the closeout phase, the County may ask that each award recipient submit the final financial, performance, and other reports required under the grant within 90 days after the grant award expires or is terminated. The County will review these reports to ensure compliance with all the grant terms and conditions and make sure they spent all the funds appropriately.

Outreach and Marketing Plan:

Our goal is to successfully reach and connect with Micro-business owners serving San Benito County, with a coordinated outreach plan focused on the underserved business owners. San Benito County's Outreach Plan is designed to work with locally established organizations in San Benito County to ensure the Micro-business owners are educated, motivated, and aware of the Micro-business grants being offered to support in relief of the COVID-19 impacts. The County will leverage social media, newspapers, our partnerships with trusted organizations to encourage eligible micro-business to apply. The primary approach will be: Educate, Motivate, and Activate, displayed in Figure 1.1: Outreach Goals. We will educate the community by providing information sessions to ask questions and learn about the program. Then we will focus on motivating and creating excitement around the program. With activate, we will encourage eligible businesses to apply to the program.

To optimize limited resources, San Benito County will engage our Public Information Officer (PIO), social media managers, and local community gathering locations to reach Micro-business owners who serve San Benito County. Post flyers and have applications available at local gathering locations, including coffee shops, faith-based groups, recreational areas, laundromats, libraries, and community bulletin boards.

Our PIO and social media managers will collaborate on creating a call-to-action message to be posted on group pages and the San Benito County Website. This message will include ideas on how the \$2,500 grant can benefit their Micro-business and what they need to do to receive funding. We will also take the opportunity to announce Micro-Business COVID-19 Relief Grant applications in local newspapers, mailers, and during County Board Meeting announcements.

Communications: We will focus on engaging and keeping an open dialogue for accurate and relevant Micro-business COVID-19 Relief Grant information. We will leverage existing county-wide resources and outreach programs like the PIO, San Benito County Free Library, San Juan Bautista Library, community group gatherings. Information will be shared in our top two languages, English and Spanish.

Training sessions and informational presentations are open to the community and make a presence at local events by attending local Farmer's Markets, recreational activities and events, engaging in current events, and open zoom informational meetings specific to Microbusiness Owners.

Media: Work with our partners to derive a message that designates with the region's unique gifts to influence Micro-business: Tri-county (Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito) media, advertising radio or local television. Local media avenues like Benito-link, Hollister freelance, and other local media outlets. Social media posts on local Facebook groups, use county, instagram and Twitter to advertise, utilize google advertising tools.

Approach: Identify locations where Micro-business owners may sell their products, advertise their services, and locations they may use as workstations. Micro-business owners may use local coffee shops, free libraries, and rental office spaces for operating. They are also more likely to use social media as their primary source of advertising. This is where we plan to reach and

inform them about the California Micro-business COVID-19 Relief Grant that is available to them and how it can benefit them.

We will utilize local groups like faith-based groups, athletic clubs, networking events to distribute information. 91% of the businesses located in our region employ less than 20 people. Over the past few years, access to training, credit, and industry experts has become more challenging for small- and medium-sized businesses. This limited access to resources has created even more challenges for those trying to grow or expand their business, particularly monolingual Spanish speakers and/or categorized as low- to moderately-low income. Of these businesses, San Benito County has many talented photographers, Bed and Breakfasts locations, produce stands, unique apparel creators, and skilled handypersons who would qualify for the Micro-business COVID-19 Relief grant.

Partnership Coordination: San Benito County will work with a group of partners to capture a more extensive outreach in our community. The organizations listed below have worked with small businesses and the underserved population. We rely on their expertise to identify qualifying Micro-business's we otherwise may overlook, which includes: City of Hollister, City of San Juan, Hollister Downtown Association, San Benito County Chamber of Commerce, County of San Benito Economic Development Corporation, San Benito County Work Force Development and Community Action Board, Monterey & San Benito County Military & Veteran's Services, Cal Coastal SBDC, Faith-based groups.

Language Access Plan: According to the American Community Survey, 59.4% of the population in San Benito County only speaks English, and 40.6 speak English and another language. English, Spanish are the most frequently spoken language in San Benito County. The

County will be providing outreach material in both English and Spanish. The County has staff on board that can assist in translating material.

III. Strategic Partnership Plan

Administration Office has developed critical partnerships with outside organizations working on various projects supporting businesses and encouraging a prosperous economy. Our geographical region and demographical population are closely aligned with that of the County of Monterey. The County often partners and shares resources and ideas within our tri-county area; we also have excellent working relationships with Santa Cruz County. (a) The County contracts with the County of Monterey for Veterans Services. Our assigned Veterans Affairs Officer works closely with veterans in San Benito County and provides essential service through this regular programming. (b) The County will work directly with the military and Veterans Affairs Officer to identify and reach San Benito County veterans, low-income who own a micro business. San Benito County is unique as it is composed of the county seat, City of Hollister, which holds the majority of the population and business, and a smaller City of San Juan Bautista. Local governmental employees typically wear many hats and have pivoted efforts to support local businesses to ensure that they thrive. (a) The Cities have dedicated individuals that support business and have established relationships with local businesses. (b) By partnering with both of our local Cities, we can keep sharing information and identify permitted micro-business located in their city boundaries. As we are a small community coordinating efforts to avoid duplication of work is essential, and we have established partnerships that have proven beneficial in our community.

The County runs the local Community Action Board (CAB) and Workforce Development Board, which assist San Benito County residents with resources to obtain skills, knowledge, and

opportunities toward self-sufficiency. In many other counties, this organization is a non-profit.

(a) The CAB assists our vulnerable populations with resources to obtain skills, knowledge, and opportunities toward self-sufficiency. They are a trusted voice in the community, and we will partner to disseminate information in communities served about the micro-grant program. (b) Through targeted outreach, to reach particularly businesses owned by women, minorities, veterans, individuals without documentation, individuals with limited English proficiency, and business owners located in low-income and rural communities. Our most vulnerable population also received public assistance programs provided through Health and Human Services who runs both CAB and Workforce Development Board. Utilizing CAB and Health and Human Services, the County can target low-income owned individuals with limited English proficiency business public.

San Benito County Chamber of Commerce and San Benito County Chamber of Commerce Foundation both established business support organizations that are respected organizations that help the community and business prosper. (a)The Chamber has a wide array of members that they are constantly supporting and have built relationships with. The Foundation supports the underserved community. (b) Both organizations can help us disseminate information about the grant to eligible microbusinesses through targeted outreach, emails, and newsletters, particularly for businesses owned by women, minorities, veterans, individuals without documentation, individuals with limited English proficiency, and business owners located in low-income and rural communities.

Economic Development Corporation of San Benito County (EDC) focuses on promoting economic development by attracting business, supporting existing business, and seeking economic opportunities. (a) They will use their current business ecosystem to target

microbusiness. (b) The organization will utilize contact connections to identify microbusinesses in San Benito County.

Cal Coastal Small Business Development Center (Cal Coastal SBDC) promotes small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs' development, growth, and success in Monterey and San Benito Counties. (a) They offer many complimentary services to local small businesses, including consulting services, trainings, events, and workshops at no cost. They provide a lot of critical resources and information that supports small business and aspiring entrepreneurs. Cal Coastal SBDC has worked diligently to build relationships with small companies and identify microbusiness clients within our region. (b) The partnership the County with Cal Coastal SBDC will provide an additional avenue to reach underserved business owners.

Local Faith-based organizations are a trusted voice in our community. (a) As many of their members are confined in the organization for essential needs and struggles. (b) By connecting and sharing information, we can create an opportunity to provide the resources to businesses majority-owned and operated daily by women, minorities or persons of color, veterans, undocumented individuals, and individuals living in low-wealth or rural areas on low incomes.

IV. Program Implementation Schedule

If the County is awarded the grant, we will aggrandize this for our December 15, 2021 Board of Supervisors meeting for a budget augmentation and establish a small committee to assist in the review process. Staff will continue to develop and fine-tune the application and process. The County will meet the Committee to review the criteria and proposed application and ensure compliance with the set standards. We are anticipating a final application to be completed and approved by the Committee in late April. The County would begin advertising

the grant application and applicant timelines in March 2022 through the end of April. Also, the County will be accepting questions and closing the questions on April 21, 2022. We will create Frequently asked questions and publish them on our County website. We are projecting the open application period **from April 1, 2022, through May 6, 2022**. We will host informational sessions via zoom, where the applicant may ask questions and gather information **on April 6 and 21**. Beginning May 9-20th, applicants will be given time to submit any missing information. **On May 23, 2022**, staff will review, organize and meet with the Committee to determine eligibility based on set criteria. Once we have a final eligible list, we will notify the applicant no later than July 1. County will work with our auditing department to process the grant, and applications anticipate receiving the grant award **by July 22, 2022**. The table below depicts key dates and scheduled activities.

The dates are outlines per task for Micro-business Grant Process.

Date	Program implementation scheduled Activities
December 15, 2021	1. Present to County Board of Supervisors for Budget Augmentation
February 2022	1. Create Committee for the application process 2. Create an application for Micro-Business Grant
March 2022 to April 2022	1. Advertise grant
April 1, 2022, to May 6, 2022	1. Open application process (must be open for four weeks or more)
April 6, 2022, and April 21, 2022	1. Evening Informational Zoom Meetings for interested organizations
May 6, 2022	1. Close application process
May 9, 2022, to May 20, 2022	1. Review and follow up on the submitted application(s). Attempt to collect missing information
May 23, 2022, to June 24, 2022	1. Meet with Committee to evaluate applications 2. Finalize award decision
July 1, 2022	1. Notify applicants
July 22, 2022	1. Award Grants

V. Program Management/Staffing Plan

During the application process, our Project Director will provide overall direction to the Project Manager, who will liaison between the Grant Committee and the rest of the team. With this direction, our Marketing/Outreach Manager will work with local partners to identify and contact eligible Micro-businesses in San Benito County. Our Marketing Manager will work with the Project Manager to create relevant content distributed through social media, news outlets, flyers, and informational zoom meetings. The Project Manager will also work closely with the Finance Manager to budget administrative expenses through tracking work hours, expenses, and other costs. We will have weekly status meetings led by the Project Manager to keep everyone working toward the same goal and receive feedback from the Project Director. Below are small bios of each individual.

Project Director: Dulce Alonso, a Senior Administrative Analyst, supports the Administrative Office for the County of San Benito and manages various projects and activities supporting multiple departments throughout the County. She was the contract administrator and led the 2020 census outreach plan in San Benito County. She has experience creating and implementing grant programs that have been contracted out and also run internally. In the CAO's office, she supports economic development. She has been with the County for approximately Four-years, and before that, she worked for the State of California Agriculture Relations Board. She has experience managing. She holds a Master's in Business Administration and Bachelors of Business Administration from California State University, Monterey Bay.

Project Manager: Graciela Rodriguez, Assistant Administrative Analyst, joined the County of San Benito in 2019. She supports the Administrative Office and manages various projects and activities while supporting multiple County departments and agencies. She is experienced in

project management, implementation, and evaluation while providing quality services aligned with the County's Strategic goals. She took the lead and implemented the newly updated County website and continues to maintain website information current in collaboration with County departments. She also collaborated with County staff in managing a Small Business Grant Program on behalf of the County of San Benito. Before joining the County team, she worked with the California State University of Chico as an Office Assistant, Ambassador, and Public Relations Manager. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resources and a minor in Spanish from Chico State.

Marketing/Outreach Manager: Jeanett Rodriguez, an Assistant Administrative Analyst, supports the Administrative Office for the County of San Benito and assists in various small projects and activities supporting multiple departments throughout the County. Currently managing the implementation of the County intranet, managed community outreach for COVID-19 Memorial, and communicates with local vendors for community fundraisers/events. Lead informational training sessions for change management. Prior experience as an Assistant Project Manager for Financial System Upgrades. She has been with the County for approximately four months, and before that, she worked for the San Mateo County Transit District. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a concentration in Marketing from San Francisco State University.

Finance Manager: Gabriel Orozco, Budget Officer, supports all San Benito County department operational and capital budgets. Works with project managers to track and report on financial status. He supports County's comprehensive strategic financial planning and financial management. Implements best practices. Gabriel graduated from California Polytechnic State University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a concentration in Financial Management. He also completed two minors in Statistics and Economics.

VI. Budget & Financial Management Systems

- a. San Benito County's anticipated award amount is \$80,077.00, of which a maximum approximately 19% will be used for administrative costs totaling \$15,077.00, leaving the remainder grant awards for eligible microbusinesses. The County anticipates that the grant program will fund at least 26 businesses awards of up to \$2,500 totaling \$65,000. From the CAO's office we will rely primarily on three key staff members with limited support from our budget officer and PIO, capturing approximately \$10,000.00 of the allocated administrative costs budget. Program Related Technology, Tools, Supplies, Materials, Marketing & Outreach Expenses adds up to approximately \$5,000.00. The attached Grantmaking Entity - Proposed Budget Detail specifies anticipated cost for each employee and the itemized expense per category.
- b. The County already has financial controls that are in place which are outlined in procedures, and policies. Program director will monitor allocation, and ensure that the usage of its financial resources are to administer or issue grants to eligible micro-businesses. In addition there will be multiple individuals involved in all process of the grant program. The County will utilize our auditing department to issue payment to the award recipients. They will receive the final list of qualified business to distribute payments once the determination and list has been finalized.
- c. The Fiscal Agent will be the County of San Benito specifically the Administration's office. The only anticipated cost will be personnel salaries and benefit expense in the amount of \$10,127.00 no fee is anticipated.